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# A FEDERAL PROGRAM FOR THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION OF DISABLED SOLDIERS AND SAILORS

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The following statement of the policies of the office of the Federal Board in giving vocational rehabilitation to disabled soldiers and sailors represents the best thought of the office of the Federal Board up to the present time. It has not been adopted by the Federal Board and is subject to change by that organization. In the form here presented it has been submitted to various persons for criticism. From this viewpoint it represents information on the part of the Director of the Federal Board as to what the office now thinks to be proper policies to adopt in dealing with the very difficult task of training and placing disabled men in happy and useful employment.

In dealing with the disabled man the board expects to treat him throughout as a civilian needing advice and assistance, to approve his choice of occupation, unless, after careful investigation, sound opinion shows it to be in the end not advisable, to train him to meet the needs of the occupation he has elected, to urge him to make the most of his opportunity to overcome his handicap by taking thorough-going instruction, to help him to secure desirable permanent employment, and to keep in close touch with him after he goes to work.

As soon as the army authorities have decided that any disabled man is to be discharged from the hospital and returned to civilian life, it becomes the duty of the Federal Board, through its vocational advisers in hospitals to deal with the problem of training him and of placing him in civilian employment. This task involves five possible steps:

- (a) Election by the disabled man of a course of training.
- (b) Preliminary training to fit him for a definite occupation or pursuit,

- (c) A probationary period of employment in that occupation or pursuit.
- (d) Placement in suitable employment in the occupation or pursuit.
- (e) Follow-up work to safeguard his interests.

#### ELECTION OF A COURSE OF TRAINING BY THE DISABLED MAN

Representatives of the Federal Board will confer with each disabled man before his discharge from the hospital. If he is able to resume his former occupation successfully, or to follow some new occupation without special training, the Federal Board will assist him, if he so desires, to secure employment therein. Should he elect, even under these circumstances, to take additional training for his occupation before he enters upon employment, the law provides that he may do so at the expense of the government under conditions determined by the Federal Board. If, however, he is unable to pursue his old occupation or to enter successfully upon a new occupation, he may be trained by the Federal Board for any vocation or pursuit that he desires to follow and in which, in the opinion of the board, he is likely to become proficient.

In advising as to future employment, representatives of the board will equip themselves with information concerning the requirements and opportunities of the various occupations. Much of this information will be furnished to the men in printed form. The representatives will also be informed concerning the kinds of occupations from which certain types of handicap are shut out.

Every effort will be made to assist the disabled man towards that occupation in which he is most interested and for which, because of his aptitude and experience on the one hand and his handicap on the other, he is best suited. In order to utilize previous knowledge and skill, the disabled man will be advised—other things being equal—to elect training, should he need it, for the industry, business or pursuit in which he was engaged before the war, or for one akin to it.

As a general policy, a handicapped man will not be directed towards an overcrowded or a waning occupation in which present or future competition might make permanent employment uncertain. In order, however, to realize fully upon the man's interest and ability, he will be given the widest possible range of choice among those desirable occupations in which, in the light of the best

medical and vocational knowledge available, with his special handicap, he can successfully engage. In this connection, the board will seek advice from those experts in the hospitals who have effected the man's physical rehabilitation.

The disabled man, with the approval of the board, may elect to be trained in agriculture, commerce, industry, transportation or the professions. The length and character of the course of instruction will depend upon the requirements of the vocation, the ability and interest of the man, and his previous training and experience.

After the vocational adviser has assisted the handicapped man to choose a suitable occupation, his case, with full information, will be referred to the office of the district wherein the man has received physical rehabilitation. Every case will there be considered individually on its merits by a local board made up of two representatives of the district office, one of whom will be a physician; and two representatives chosen from the locality, one of whom will be an employer and one a representative of labor. If necessary the man, himself, accompanied by the vocational adviser, may appear before the local board.

#### THE PRELIMINARY TRAINING FOR A DEFINITE OCCUPATION OR PURSUIT

After physical rehabilitation, the discharged soldier or sailor becomes a civilian to be trained for and placed in civilian employment by the Federal Board. As a learner and student it is proper that he be supported by the government; therefore, the same allotment and family allowance for his dependents will be paid as were received by them while he was in the military service. As a student, moreover, he will have the same freedom as any other civilian attending school or college. He will be "on his own," meeting such expenses as are not covered by the board from the compensation provided in the Vocational Rehabilitation Act and sent, monthly or semi-monthly, direct to him.

Through the district vocational office, where a medical officer will be stationed, the health of the disabled man will be cared for, while in training, by the board. After he secures permanent employment, he, as a beneficiary under the War Risk Insurance Act, will be cared for by the War Risk Insurance Bureau, should there be any recurrence of disabilities due to military service.

As a student supported by the government while taking instruction, the disabled man will be expected to pursue the work in a satisfactory way and to obey reasonable rules and regulations. Continued failure to do so will result in dismissal. Where it is found advisable to shift the student from one course of training or from one class or school to another, this, with his consent, will be done.

The disabled man will be given his preliminary training in a variety of ways. As far as possible, existing facilities will be utilized. While the plant, equipment and staff of existing schools and colleges will, in many instances, be used, there will have to be in many cases special arrangements to meet the needs of the disabled man. Manufacturing establishments, offices and farms will be employed to give preliminary training, especially for those occupations not yet regarded as being within the school or college field. In every case, however, the Federal Board will require the course of instruction to be adapted to the interests and needs of the disabled man, to be definitely planned for him as a learner, and to be arranged or approved, as well as to be inspected and supervised, by its agents. The length of this course of preliminary training will vary greatly according to the ability, ambition and handicaps of the man and the requirements of the work itself, or to the skill and knowledge required for present and future success.

#### A PROBATIONARY PERIOD OF EMPLOYMENT IN THE OCCUPATION OR PURSUIT

In assisting the disabled man to secure desirable employment, the Federal Board, as authorized and directed by the Vocational Rehabilitation Act, will utilize as far as may be practicable the facilities of the Department of Labor under some plan of coöperation to be determined. Where the man has been given preliminary training outside the plant, office or farm on which he is to be employed, this probationary period will begin when he is transferred, as a beginner, into the occupation or pursuit. Where the preliminary training has been given within the plant, office or farm, the period of probation will start at the point, in the case of each individual, where he becomes capable of entering upon the occupation or pursuit as a worker.

As a probationer he will be perfecting himself in processes, ad-

justing himself to the demands of commercial production and gradually fitting himself to become a permanent employe at the prevailing wage, either in the place where he is serving his probationary period or elsewhere. During this period the Federal Board will regard him as in training and subject to its inspection and supervision; but any wages he may receive as a probationer will be over and above the amount paid to him by the government while he is in training.

#### PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT IN THE OCCUPATION OR PURSUIT

This will begin at the point when, in the opinion of the board, the probationer has adjusted himself to the requirements of the occupation or pursuit as a workman. The shifting from probationary to permanent employment may be made in either the same or another establishment, and the disabled man will have the same freedom of choice and action as any other workman "on his own." Support by the government of them as a student will cease at the close of the probationary period. As a beneficiary under the War Risk Insurance Act, however, he will be entitled to the compensation allotted under that act. In most cases this will be less than the support received from the Federal Board under the provisions of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act.

The aim of the board will always be to direct the disabled man towards, and to provide him with, training for an occupation in which he can become as proficient as the normal man, yet it must not be overlooked that some of the disabled men will not become fully competent to earn the prevailing wage. Therefore, where a disabled man is unable, because of his handicap, to earn the full prevailing wage for his occupation, an adjustment in accordance with the rules and regulations of the shop is to be made. Where working agreements are in effect between employers and employes, the regulations thereof shall govern the procedure in adjusting such partial wages. Where there are no such facilities, the adjustment is to be made by conference between the man, his employer and a representative of the Federal Board. It should be fully understood that the disabled man himself, as a free contracting agent, may in every case accept or reject any terms or scale proposed.

This disabled man should, however, receive equal pay for equal work, and under no circumstances will a wage for a disabled man

be approved by the Federal Board where it appears that decreases have been made because he is receiving a compensation for his injury from the government.

As the official friend and adviser to the disabled man, the board will keep in touch with him, through its representatives, for such period after he enters employment as may be necessary to complete, in each individual case, his re-establishment as a civilian worker. The board will protect him against injustice or exploitation by the adjustment of difficulties and if need be by aiding him through further training or assistance to secure other and more desirable employment in the same or another occupation.